

**HB 5279: 'AN ACT ELIMINATING THE MINIMUM FAIR WAGE EXCEPTION
FOR CERTAIN CITIZENS OF CONNECTICUT'**

**LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 27, 2014
TESTIMONY**

Good afternoon committee.

My name is Anna Cardona. I am representing CCARC – a nonprofit organization located in New Britain. I am responsible for our day program. Our mission is to make dreams happen and our vision is to provide personalized services for people with disabilities. We have been providing these services for over 60 years.

As a human services agency, we help people develop daily living and job skills. We have more than a dozen individuals placed in various kinds of employment at minimum wage. And, we have approximately 20 individuals earning sub-minimum wages.

I want to talk about one developmentally disabled woman's job experience, someone who **makes** minimum wage.

Joanne has been employed for 11 years at a fast food restaurant. To get to work, Joanne proudly learned to access and utilize the city bus. Joanne arrived to work, greeted everyone she knew, clocked in, washed her hands and would get supplies. Initially, she worked 'on the line' wrapping burgers and boxing food items for orders. Joanne followed the directions of the co-worker next to her.

Over the course of her career, the employer made the necessary accommodations based on her needs and abilities.

At the beginning of last year, for three months, Joanne was not scheduled for work. The manager cited "slow business and the economy." In March 2013, she came back on the schedule at a reduced amount of hours. In October, the restaurant owner stated, "I can't afford minimum wage any more to keep Joanne employed here." Joanne was devastated.

This is the case of someone who was **earning** minimum wage.

Imagine the impact of other people whose employment hourly rate is forced to rise to minimum wage?

Individuals like Joanne are the least able, least skilled, most challenged and need the most support.

While CCARC doesn't advocate for discrimination on any basis, the reality is that not unlike Joanne, any other individuals that were making less than minimum wage that are now in positions that required minimum wage, then more stories like Joanne's would occur.

Although this bill sounds reasonable, it would lead to business owners having to make these hard choices. You already have heard just one example of what will happen. The sub-minimum wage was not established to take advantage of people. Sub-minimum wage was put into law to protect them and allow businesses to give certain individuals jobs.

Please help us to protect the Joannes.

Thank you for listening to her story today.